

bad plan to have a group rather than a single man's viewpoint. When the executive officer and the advisory board members are all high type men, the results obtained in a department so managed, should be better than if the entire responsibility was lodged on the shoulders of one individual.

In the past, many of such advisory health boards have been composed entirely of physicians; or if not, then usually with a majority of physicians composing the membership. With the advent of new schools of medicine, the distribution has sometimes included physicians of different schools of the healing art. The work which has been done by such conjoint boards has in many instances been very creditable.

It occasioned some surprise, therefore, when a Los Angeles newspaper recently stated that its city health officer had gone on record as favoring a health board of five laymen to be appointed by the mayor, to act as his immediate advisors on matters of health and sanitation; with a health advisory board of twelve physicians who would presumably give more remote advice to this regular health board of laymen. In the last analysis in such a plan, the lay health board, in conjunction with the health officer, would have the final or real authority as to what should or should not be done in solving the community health problems.

The institution of such a lay health board would certainly seem to be somewhat of an innovation. Whether it would be an innovation for good or for ill, would be dependent largely upon the character, capacity and mutual good will of the men involved, namely, the health officer, the members of the lay health board of five, and of the medical advisory board of twelve. Whether this medical advisory board was to be divided among the so-called regulars, homeopaths, eclectics, chiropractors, naturopaths and others, to add to the further complications of the remote advice, was not stated.

This editorial comment is given because this proposed change seems to mark a somewhat important departure in methods of procedure as regards public health office management in a large city. Whether or not the proposed system is one that would ultimately work out as a desirable change generally, is however, a question. Our experience with advisory boards that have no real authority, has been that they are largely figure-head propositions. If such a medical advisory board should become a figure-head proposition, would it be to the advantage of organized medicine, as represented by ethical practitioners, to have much to do with the system? Should we as ethical physicians, permit the name of our particular group of the healing art to bear part of the responsibility, or at least receive the onus of mistakes of procedure, when we are not permitted to have any of the authority that would permit us to promulgate and work for the execution of those public health measures in which, because of our training, we as a group believe? These and other questions of similar import come to our mind in a consideration of this proposed innovation. It will be interesting to note how the plan works out, if it is put into operation.

## PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS OF THE C. M. A.

At the fifty-sixth annual session of the California Medical Association, held at Los Angeles, a special committee on revision of the constitution and by-laws brought in its tentative report to the House of Delegates. The present constitution and by-laws provide that all proposed amendments must be printed in CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN MEDICINE, and in the observance of this rule the various amendments that were presented at Los Angeles by the special committee, by the counsel of the association, and by individual members of the association, are printed on subsequent pages of CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN MEDICINE. At the same time the present constitution and by-laws has been reprinted. This has been deemed desirable, because there are only six copies or so of the present constitution and by-laws at hand. The consideration of proposed amendments made it desirable that the rules now in force should be obtainable by all members interested, if the best judgment was to be used in making changes.

The special committee on revision will continue its work, and from these various proposed amendments, will present to the Council of the Association a final draft of a complete constitution and by-laws; so that the members of the House of Delegates at the Sacramento meeting may have a foundation upon which to base their labors. A proposed amendment that is in the nature of an enabling clause, was submitted at the Los Angeles meeting, and if this is adopted at the Sacramento meeting, it will be possible for the House of Delegates at the fifty-seventh annual session, to practically act as a constitutional convention, with full authority to work out those rules of government, which in the experience of our own and other state medical associations, and of our own special geographical and social environments, would seem best adapted to the needs of the California Medical Association.

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**Value of a Poem by a Lunatic**—A copy of a poem which was written in a lunatic asylum fetched 590 pounds sterling at the sale of the Britwell library recently, says the *New York Times*. It was "A Song of David," inscribed by Christopher Smart when he was immured in Bethlehem Hospital, "partly with charcoal on the walls or indented with a key on the panels of his cell," because writing materials were forbidden to him. Browning and Rossetti considered this poem to rank with the highest achievements of Milton or Keats. Doctor Johnson always held that Smart ought not to have been shut up. His comment was: "Smart insisted on people praying with him—also falling on his knees and saying prayers in the street or any other unusual place, but I would as lief pray with Kid Smart as anyone else. Another charge was that he did not love clean linen, and I have no passion for it."—*M. J. and Record*.

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**Diphtheria Immunization**—A letter from Dr. Ralph Sheldon, health officer of Lyons, Wayne County, states that over 1400 or 98 per cent of the children in that village have been immunized against diphtheria in the past four years. At a recent clinic 258 children received the third dose of toxin-antitoxin, ninety-nine being of preschool age.—New York State Department of Health.